Sample Mesopotamia Notes- The Fertile Crescent

* Cities

Cities built around a public courtyard

Square houses made of mud bricks

Narrow streets, flushable toilets

* Economy (Job Specialization/trade)

potters, carpenters, metal workers, basket weavers, jewelers produced goods

farmers raised cattle, sheep, goats, and pigs for meat milk, leather, wool

they grew wheat, barley, fruit trees, garden veggetables like cucumbers, peas, onions, lettuce

traded crops and cloth

* Government

Ruled by kings- mighty men with the strongest army

Also governed by laws

Code of Hammurabi- first legal code that was written and posted

Displayed on large black stones called stelas

Produced by Babylonian king Hammurabi

Examples of laws- business partnerships, divorce laws, laws about loaning money

laws to punish those who harmed others (the carpenter who builds a shoddy house, doctor who kills a patient)

* Religion

Polytheistic- belief in multiple gods

Believed in gods that were human in form with supernatural powers

Gave offerings to the gods to win their favor

There were good gods and bad demons

Ziggurats- temples built to worship and bring offerings to the gods

Look like a layered cake, or stepped pyramid

* Social organization

1 Kings and their families

2 landowners, military, priests

3 scribes, craftsmen, merchants

4 farmers and herdsmen

5 slaves

* Arts and architecture

Used the arch in doorways

Stringed instruments

Hanging gardens of Babylon

Weapons of war- wheel, chariot, armored “car,” underwater breathing device

Astronomy- recorded positions of stars and named constellations

* Public works

Irrigation systems

Central planning of cities

* Writing

Developed first in Sumer as a means of keeping track of farmers crops and herds, tallying shares to divide among workers and offerings to the gods.

Writing began as a series of pictures which were simplified and eventually become symbols. Sumerians used a system of wedge- shaped writing symbols known as cuneiform

They wrote with a stylus made from a reed onto a clay tablet

Epic of Gilgamesh- Mesopotamian myth that centers on stories of the half-god, half-human hero Gilgamesh.

Stories from the Epic of G- conquers an evil demon, spurns the female goddess of love and war who sends a bull to trample Gilgamesh, but is defeated. Records the event of a catastrophic flood which is survived by a man who escapes by placing his family and animals in a boat. Gilgamesh searches for immortality, and decides that he must be content to do good with the time that he has

Used a base ten numbering system, developed a symbol for zero, and also used a base 60 counting system, reflected in our measurement of seconds, minutes, and hours, as well as the number of degrees in a circle